

Simultaneous Interpreting and Religious Experience: Volunteer Interpreting in a Finnish Pentecostal Church

Sari Hokkanen
University of Tampere

Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the volunteer simultaneous church interpreting I conduct as a professionally trained interpreter, using autoethnography as my methodological approach. The aim is to examine how my professional identity and my identity as a Pentecostal Christian coexist in this non-professional interpreting context. Pentecostalism emphasizes personal religious experience, defined as encountering God, making it a salient feature of the social context of the volunteer interpreting context. Therefore, I study spiritual and practical levels of preparation related to simultaneous interpreting at church. In addition, I examine the ways in which having a personal religious experience, “hearing from God,” while interpreting speaks of my active participation in the interpreted service. The paper thus highlights the dynamics of professional and non-professional interpreting as social contexts carrying meaning over to personal practice.

1. Introduction

The field of non-professional interpreting and translation encompasses a myriad of different kinds of actors and practices, even though for many

translation and interpreting scholars and professionals the term *non-professional* seems to primarily connote a set of antitheses and negatives: it refers to untrained people who are outside of the professional circles and thus unaware of what interpreting and translation *really* is and what it requires, inescapably leading to poor-quality translation and interpreting. These connotations are hardly justifiable in most cases of real-life non-professional translation and interpreting practices, which, despite being ubiquitous, have not received much scholarly attention until recently. This paper adopts the definitions of the terms *professional* and *non-professional translation and interpreting* put forth by Brian Harris (2012; 2010; 2009). According to Harris, *professional* interpreting and translation refers to interpreting and translation that is remunerated. This differs from *expert* interpreting and translation, which denotes the high quality of the practice, acquired through formal training and/or mentoring and experience. Thus *non-professional* interpreting and translation refers neither to the quality of the end-product nor necessarily to the qualifications of the interpreter or translator, but merely to the fact that such work is not paid for.

In this paper I describe one non-professional interpreting setting in which a professionally trained interpreter volunteers. The setting that I focus on is religious in nature, more specifically, a Pentecostal church situated in Seinäjoki, Finland. The study of interpreting in any religious setting, professional or non-professional, has been scarce so far (Harris 2012), giving further reason to include religious settings in research into non-professional practices, even though religious settings may have characteristics that cannot be generalized across all non-professional settings. Even so, religious interpreting settings may have plenty of similarities with non-religious settings that nevertheless have a strong ideology (Hokkanen 2012). With autoethnography as the method of this study, I use as data my own experiences as a church interpreter. I have a

Master's degree in English translation, which includes interpreting training, and have worked professionally as a translator and interpreter. Thus, I could be described as a professionally trained interpreter, but in my church, I interpret without remuneration.

The services in the Pentecostal Church of Seinäjoki are conducted mainly in Finnish. Nevertheless, the attendants and speakers in the church, as in many other Finnish Pentecostal churches, do not form a monolingual speech community, which is why interpreting, often practiced by volunteer church members, is present in several modes: often the sermons given by guest speakers from abroad are interpreted consecutively into Finnish, and many of the weekly services are interpreted simultaneously into English and/or other languages to cater to the needs of immigrants and visitors who do not speak Finnish. In addition to these, mostly volunteer practices, the services are interpreted into Finnish sign language by professional (i.e. paid) interpreters who are usually not members of the church. This paper, however, focuses on the non-professional simultaneous interpreting of services into English. I have been involved in this practice since 2007, first in the Tampere Pentecostal Church and from 2009 in the Pentecostal Church of Seinäjoki, where I continue the practice to this day.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the way in which my identities as a professionally trained interpreter and as an active member of the religious community coexist in the non-professional interpreting setting during the interpreted event. This is done by examining the concept of religious experience, defined as encountering God, and by describing the ways in which I prepare to mediate religious experience to others in services in the function of a volunteer simultaneous interpreter. Furthermore, my aim is to describe how a personal religious experience, more specifically, "hearing" from God, can occur even during simultaneous interpreting. Thus my aim is

to illustrate the primary position of church interpreters' social self compared to their "interpreter self," by describing the interpreter in this setting an active participant who engages in the service spiritually, much the same way as any attendant.

The paper proceeds from a description of the methodology employed in the study in Section 2, to a description of the denominational and ideational context of the interpreting practice being studied in Section 3. Section 4 provides a data-oriented discussion of simultaneous church interpreting, focusing on preparation and religious experience, whereas Section 5 presents some concluding remarks.

2. Methodology

Autoethnography, the method used in this study, refers to an approach that follows the ethnographic tradition but also differs from more traditional types of ethnographic research, as described by Chang (2008: 48-49). Similarly to other forms of ethnography, autoethnography uses systematically collected data from "the field" acquired through the personal participation of the researcher in the life of the group being studied. These data are then analyzed and interpreted in order to form a cultural understanding of the life of this group. However, autoethnography differs from some other ethnographic approaches in that it uses the personal experiences of the researcher as the *primary* data (*ibid.*), which is complemented with interviews with other members of the group, research literature or the examination of cultural artifacts to varying degrees (Ellis *et al.* 2011). Although autoethnography thus relies on the person of the researcher even more heavily than other forms ethnography, its aim is nevertheless to acquire knowledge of the social group in which the

researcher operates (Chang 2008; Chang & Boyd 2011). Thus, autoethnographers “use personal experience to illustrate facets of cultural experience” (Ellis *et al.* 2011).

This aim of autoethnography – to access the cultural through the personal – is made possible by an understanding of the individual as “an extension of a community” rather than “an independent, self-sufficient being” (Chang 2008: 26). This is not to say that individuals were mere prisoners of their community or mindless robots whose thoughts and behavior were dictated by the “scripts” of their culture. Rather, individuals do have the power to oppose the norms of their culture and to influence and help transform their social communities. Consequently, there is always some diversity within any social group (Chang 2008: 21). Even so, as Chang argues, “culture is inherently collectivistic,” and not purely individual (*ibid.*). The individual does not exist in a vacuum, but in relation to a social context, or culture, constituted of different “others” that are in contact with the individual: those that have similar views and experiences and those that have differing or opposing ones (Chang 2008).

Because the autoethnographer is “both a ‘subject’ (researcher who does investigation) and an ‘object’ (participant who is investigated)” in the research (Chang & Boyd 2011: 15), autoethnographies seldom strive towards “objectivity,” but openly acknowledge and utilize the subjectivity of the approach (see also Ellis & Bochner 2000). This is often misunderstood as self-indulgence or narcissism (Sparkes 2002; Chang & Boyd 2011: 15). Nevertheless, the aim of autoethnography, as understood here, is to acquire and report an understanding of cultural phenomena; not to engage in self-revelation for its own sake.

Whereas different ethnographic approaches in general have become increasingly popular among translation and interpreting scholars in recent years (Flynn 2010; see also Saldanha & O'Brien 2013; Hale & Napier 2013; Angelelli 2015), autoethnography as such does not seem to be very widely used as of yet. However, I would argue that it forms a useful extension of the long tradition in translation and interpreting studies of practitioners themselves conducting research. In fact, according to Miriam Shlesinger, "most of us [researchers] are, or have ourselves been at some point, translators or interpreters, or both" (2009: 1). Shlesinger admits that the experiences and insights gained from either personal practice or from practicing colleagues "are arguably our most valuable resource" when conducting research on translation or interpreting, but she goes on to assert that "they are not enough in themselves" (2009: 14). Admittedly, if the researcher's personal experience is left in a state of unprocessed intuition and not subjected to systematic analysis and interpretation, it hardly constitutes serious research (see also Napier 2011). One such a systematic and analytical way for translation and interpreting scholars to tap into this "our most valuable resource" of personal experience is provided by autoethnography. It offers one approach to bringing the personal experiences of the researcher to light, articulating the insights gained from these experiences and reporting their influence in research. As these influences are stated explicitly, it may render the research process more transparent and, potentially, more ethical.

The data used in this study comprises a record of my experiences as a volunteer interpreter in the Pentecostal Church of Seinäjoki, collected in 2012, as well as of my memories of church interpreting dating back to 2007 and informal discussions with other interpreters and listeners of interpreting. In addition, I have used personal journals I have kept since 2001 when I was first introduced to Pentecostalism¹, as well as the data I have gathered in the

Tampere Pentecostal Church on church interpreting in 2009 and 2010 in the form of field notes and documents. The data gathered in the Tampere Pentecostal Church were also used in my Master's thesis (Hokkanen 2010) as well as in Hokkanen (2012). All in all, this study is informed by my experience of Finnish Pentecostalism ranging well over a decade, including several forms of participation and volunteering in the activities of the two churches whose member I have been.

3. Pentecostalism and religious experience

Both of the churches in which I have collected data, the Pentecostal Church of Seinäjoki and the Tampere Pentecostal Church, represent Pentecostalism, which in Finland is not organized as a national Church, but the local churches form autonomous entities (Kärkkäinen 2005). Even so, there is cooperation between the different local churches, for instance, in the form of a summer conference, a newspaper and an annual gathering of pastors and elders, and Finnish Pentecostalism is generally conceptualized as a denomination (e.g. Terho 2006).

A well-known researcher of Pentecostalism, Walter Hollenweger (1997:329), has pointed out that Pentecostalism, on a global level, is a denomination that is not tied together by a specific doctrine, but by an experiential, oral and ecumenical way of *doing* theology that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit. As Miller and Yamamori have articulated this point, "Pentecostalism is not simply a set of beliefs; it is an experience" (2007: 14). This emphasis on experience and lack of written doctrine has been a central feature of Pentecostalism from its beginning (Kärkkäinen 2001: 102). Also according to the self-understanding of Pentecostals, the claim of having personal and regular experiences of God through the Holy

Spirit is a characteristic that most distinguishes the denomination from other Christian groups (Cross 2009: 6). It is clear, then, that religious experience plays a central role in Pentecostalism, making it an important aspect of the cultural context of the interpreting practice studied in this paper.

According to theologian David Brown, religious experience is essentially “God being encountered in Himself” (2007: 171), and this notion of “encounter” as the core of religious experience seems to be well established in the literature (e.g. Geertz 1973/1993; Nelson 2005). It is also adopted in this paper. Furthermore, religious experience can be described as being both subjective and highly dependent on the social context; the subjective attribution of an event as a religious experience is dependent on the collective belief system the individual has adopted (Nelson 2005: 54; Bowie 2003: 56; Hornsby-Smith 1998). Clifford Geertz in his seminal work *The Interpretation of Cultures* goes, perhaps, a bit further, stating that the collective beliefs adopted by an individual help to interpret and give meaning to a wide range of experiences but also to shape them, be they intellectual, emotional or moral ones (1973/1993: 123-124). For Geertz, religious beliefs are a culture pattern, and as any culture pattern, they give meaning to and shape not only subjective experience but also the social reality (*ibid.* 93).

Pentecostalism is known to emphasize personal experience, for instance, as regards salvation; the saying “God has no grandchildren” is sometimes used to highlight the belief that no-one is saved by their parents’ or anyone else’s faith, but each person must accept Jesus as their Savior personally in order to be saved. Even so, Pentecostals do acknowledge the socialization or “learning process” (Hornsby-Smith 1998: 416, drawing on Wilson 1996) involved in religious experience, even if not explicitly. One indication of the socialization process involved in “learning” religious experience in

Pentecostalism is provided in a hand-out given in a course in the Tampere Pentecostal Church. This document explains how any experience a Pentecostal might have requires faith, which in turn is preceded by “correct” knowledge of the Bible. Thus knowledge of the Bible comes first, and this should be acquired by both personally reading the Bible and listening to or reading the teachings provided by “trusted” sources, such as the local church. This knowledge, then, creates faith, which will lead to experience.

Religious experience is social not only in the sense that it is dependent on doctrine or the collective belief system adopted by the individual, but also in the sense that it can take place in a social setting and be shared (Hornsby-Smith 1998), such as in a collective service or meeting, as services are often called in Pentecostalism. This is in line with my understanding, as a Pentecostal, on the purpose of meetings – we come together to encounter God. Nevertheless, Pentecostals do not take this shared religious experience as a given: mere attendance to a meeting is insufficient. Rather, it usually requires a deliberate choice of *wanting* to encounter God and having a specific mental disposition in order to have a religious experience. During the services, this is often put in words like “opening one’s heart” or “turning one’s eyes” towards God. This could, in part, be conceptualized as a type of preparation, which, according to Brown (2007: 173) is an inextricable part of any religious experience. Some means of preparation mentioned by Brown are prayer and the calming of mind and body, such as controlling one’s breathing and posture.

Preparation, by whatever means, highlights another aspect of religious experience: it is mediated, either by mental processes as discussed above or by the senses, by observing something external to oneself such as architecture or participating in an activity such as singing (Brown 2007: 173). The Pentecostal tradition affirms this notion. Often nature is

mentioned as something that speaks of the Creator and therefore can lead to an encounter with Him. Another means of preparation traditional in Pentecostalism is music, which is usually always included in meetings and understood as a channel through which God can be encountered. However, one type of mediation that is important in the Pentecostal tradition is not mentioned by Brown: other people. Pentecostals believe that God uses other Christians as channels; that through the service provided by believers in meetings and other gatherings – be it in the form of music, preaching or prayer – they can encounter God. Importantly, for Pentecostals, these other people are by no means regarded as the source of the experience. Nor is it thought that people can “give” others a religious experience at will. Rather, those functioning as channels as well as those receiving can only align themselves so that God can do what He wishes to – encounter His children.

4. Interpreting for and through religious experience

In this section, my aim is to examine the coexistence of simultaneous interpreting and religious experience in the volunteer interpreting of a Pentecostal service. First, in Section 4.1, I provide a short description of the interpreting practice I have studied. Then, in Section 4.2, I focus on preparation in terms of religious experience, on one hand, and the simultaneous interpreting task, on the other, with the intention of highlighting the way in which my interpreting is aimed at aiding others’ encounter with God. In Section 4.3, I move on to describe interpreting that is carried out through, or together with, a type of religious experience called “hearing” from God.

4.1 Description of the interpreting practice

When I conducted fieldwork in the Pentecostal Church of Seinäjoki (2010–2014), the church offered simultaneous interpreting regularly twice a week: on Wednesday evenings and on Sunday mornings. The Wednesday meetings usually lasted for two hours – a bit longer than the Sunday services – and they also usually featured more contemporary worship music. The Wednesday meetings also attracted many people from other denominations in the area as well as from elsewhere in Finland, because they had gained a reputation as gatherings in which the Spirit of God moves powerfully. These meetings also often included a call for conversion, and were thus seen as more evangelizing in their purpose than the Sunday services, which were sometimes seen mainly as a gathering of the church family, even though non-members were welcome to both.

For the purposes of simultaneous interpreting, the church has two built-in booths with visual access to the stage and parts of the main hall. One booth was used for English interpreting, the other for Russian, at the time the fieldwork was conducted. In both languages, only one interpreter worked at a time. The interpreting equipment used in the church is not identical with what is used in professional conference interpreting settings, although it has the same features – in addition to many unnecessary ones, making the equipment overly complicated for its purpose according to some interpreters. There were eight regular English interpreters at the church with about as many reserve interpreters. The people listening to the interpreting were usually immigrants and exchange students, mostly African, along with occasional visitors. In any given meeting in which interpreting was offered,

there were usually between five and fifteen listeners, the majority of which listening to English interpreting.

An important starting point in the present discussion of church interpreting is the conceptualization of volunteer interpreting in the church as a form of Christian service (Hokkanen 2012). In this sense, interpreting does not differ from other tasks that I may perform voluntarily in church, be it preaching or leading worship; I am there to serve God and the church. This concept of service, then, partially defines my understanding of what it means to be a church interpreter, which is why a brief discussion of the notion is provided here. In Pentecostalism, serving is understood as the voluntary (and usually non-paid) work one does in and for the church, thus helping to “build up” the church – to maintain its many activities and develop them further. Serving, as a concept, is close to volunteer work, but the two are not entirely synonymous, as serving can also take place in non-institutional settings outside the church and be unorganized, as when helping a neighbor. A further difference between serving and volunteering is that sometimes Pentecostals regard the work they do for a living as service to God and humankind, if one is a nurse, for example, or to the church, if one is a pastor. The ultimate motivation to serve is thought to rise from a personal relationship with God and a sense of gratitude for His love and Christ’s sacrifice. The ability to serve is seen as the result of personalized gifts or skills that God has provided for each individual. This also means that Pentecostals believe that there is a certain “place” for each individual, in which he or she is designed to serve, although it is thought that one

person may be meant to serve in more than one place at once or consecutively during their lifetime.

4.2 Preparing to interpret in a Pentecostal meeting

When church interpreting is seen as a form of Christian service, the church interpreter's task and role receives a spiritual meaning that may not be relevant in other settings. This spiritual meaning is influenced by the religious goals of the interpreted event, and, as discussed in Section 3, in a Pentecostal church, these goals revolve around religious experience. As also discussed in Section 3, one important aspect of religious experience is preparation. Therefore, this section will examine different levels of preparation related to both religious experience and simultaneous church interpreting.

Regarding preparation, I have made use of Brown's (2007) understanding of preparation as the individual "techniques" that one does more or less immediately before a religious experience, such as prayer, with the intention of them helping one to encounter God. However, in this discussion, the concept of preparation also encompasses more practical activities, such as familiarizing with the portions Scripture to be featured in the interpreted sermon or organizing the interpreting booth. For the purposes of this analysis, I call these two aspects spiritual preparation and practical preparation, although the distinction is somewhat artificial; when performing practical tasks within my place of service, they have spiritual significance. A further differentiation from Brown is that, in this discussion, the goal of preparation is not only to achieve a personal religious experience, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to mediate religious

experience to others – to help create a framework for others’ encounter with God (see also Miller & Yamamori 2007).

The importance of preparation for religious experience not only arises from the literature, but is also seen as an important part of service within the church. The crucial role of spiritual preparation, mostly in the form of prayer, but also in the form of speaking in tongues and reading the Bible, is often discussed in sermons and in conversations between members, since service, in whatever form, is seen as a spiritual activity. However, as regards practical preparation, I have observed two somewhat conflicting lines of thought within Pentecostalism. The first emphasizes spiritual preparation in expense of the practical. Pentecostals value spontaneity in collective services, which is seen as a sign of the Holy Spirit being allowed to move freely among the congregation, making rigid schedules and plans a sign of religiosity: rituals without relationship. Thus, what is seen as most important is that whoever serves be “open” to the Holy Spirit, making other “human” effort redundant or, at worst, detrimental to the work of the Spirit. The second line of thought values both spiritual and practical preparation, acknowledging that practical preparation is not only necessary for most places of service, but that it, too, is spiritual and does not hinder the work of the Spirit when done with prayer.² I follow this second line of thought, which is reflected in the inclusion of practical preparation in this discussion.

Furthermore, I have chosen preparation as an object of analysis because it is seen as an important part of the work of professional interpreters, as well. An adequate preparation for interpreting assignments, for example in the form of making sure that material is sent to the interpreter in advance, is mentioned in national and international professional codes of conduct (SKTL 1994; AIIC 2015). Preparation was also chosen as one area of comparison between simultaneous interpreters of different levels of

experience in Vik-Tuovinen (2006) and mentioned as “an indispensable part of [simultaneous interpreters’] professional practice” by Jiang (2013: 88), who focused on interpreters’ glossaries. Thus the analysis and the importance of the concept of preparation to me testify to my socialization into both Pentecostalism and the professional interpreting community.

The following narrative, Example (1), illustrates the interplay of these different levels of preparation in a church service that I interpreted. This and subsequent examples are all derived from the field journal I kept during fieldwork in the Pentecostal Church of Seinäjoki, between 2011 and 2014, but they have been reconstructed into a new narrative in order to reflect the cultural understandings I have arrived at after analyzing the research material as a whole (see Bochner 2012). Example (1) is based on two separate interpreting occasions (one in January, 2012, the other in May, 2014).

- (1) In the process of hanging my coat in the church lobby, I hear a familiar voice call my name. It’s Tiina, a fellow church interpreter. After we’ve exchanged pleasantries, I tell her I have to get moving soon, because I’m interpreting the service today. “What, again?” she asks. “It feels like it’s your shift all the time.” “Yeah, I guess I’m here pretty often,” I say with a smile. “But then again, I think interpreting is fun, so I don’t mind.” Tiina agrees, and adds, “Interpreting is also great because you don’t really have to prepare. All you have to do is show up.”

So, I showed up, I think as I get to the booth. Does that mean I’m ready? The booth at least isn’t ready. I pick up half a dozen headphones and insert into them the rechargeable batteries waiting in the charger. I switch on the equipment and adjust the

microphone standing on the table. Then I take out a bottle of water from my purse, together with my smart phone that holds the Bible app I use when I interpret and the notebook I use for field notes. Okay, now I'm ready, I think and proceed to check if I would have enough change to buy a cup of coffee from the cafeteria. Sadly, I don't, so instead I make a few notes in my notebook.

I remember that when I started interpreting in church, still studying for my Master's, I used to do vocal exercises at home and read the Bible in English out loud. Back then, in Tampere, we also sometimes got the preacher's notes for the sermon beforehand, so I'd do a *prima vista* on them and check the Bible references, sometimes even writing them down. Seven years later, I don't find that important anymore. Or necessary, to be more precise.

Still mulling over the topic of preparation, I stare at what I wrote last in the notebook: "5 cents short for coffee" and wince out of guilt. Why do I spend these few minutes before service writing down trivial "observations from the field," instead of making sure my heart is ready to serve God? Why am I not praying?

There are two details in example (1) that I would like highlight. First, the narrative illustrates that simultaneous interpreting in church may include both practical and spiritual preparation. However, the actual tasks required for practical preparation (such as inserting batteries into headphones) are fairly small and only instrumentally related to simultaneous interpreting. Indeed, I would argue that this is why Tiina (a pseudonym) claimed that interpreting at church does not require preparation at all. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that for her, what I have here called spiritual preparation

seemingly did not count as preparation, if one truly only needs to “show up.” Alternatively, it may be argued that she did not find spiritual preparation important for interpreting. Because I did not have the chance to discuss this topic again with Tiina, I cannot provide a reliable interpretation of her intention. However, knowing the context of meaning of the social setting, I would suggest her comment could also be seen as indicating the close relationship between a church interpreter’s “Christian self” and “interpreter self.” Ideally, a church member would engage in the “techniques” of spiritual preparation, such as prayer, as a matter of course in their everyday life, whether or not they would serve in church.

The second detail in Example (1) on which I would like to elaborate relates to the changes in practical preparation that have occurred in my own history of church interpreting. When I began interpreting in church, I employed standard preparation techniques learned in interpreting classes (such as *prima vista*). However, these techniques have become less necessary as I have become more familiar with the speech event, even though Pentecostal services do not follow a predefined (let alone written) liturgy. This trend of me preparing for interpreting less as experience grows seems to be in accordance with what Vik-Tuovinen (2006) observed when comparing interpreters with different levels of experience. Many of the more experienced interpreters did not put as much weight on making, for example, glossaries as they did on situational factors and information on the topic of the interpreted event. Jiang (2013: 90) also points out that professional and especially freelance interpreters participate temporarily and as “lay persons” in an interpreted event. Thus, their practice of compiling glossaries is necessary in order to learn both vocabulary and relevant concepts. However, I as a church interpreter am in church neither temporarily nor as a “lay person” in the sense that I would not share in the specialized area of knowledge with the other participants. In addition, I have

also gained knowledge about most of the speakers, another possible area of preparation mentioned by Vik-Tuovinen (2006). Thus, years of experience have given me a fairly thorough familiarity with the interpreted event, its topic, commonly used terms and phrases as well as its speakers. This accumulated knowledge has decreased my need to prepare for interpreting at church.

As discussed above in Section 3, spiritual preparation is an important aspect of religious experience, which, in turn, is embedded in the goals of church interpreting as an instance of Christian service. Therefore, Example (2) aims to illustrate the ways in which the social meanings attached in the church to service and religious experience are reflected in the practices of preparing for church interpreting. Example (2) is derived from two entries of field notes, both written in February, 2012.

- (2) Too often I come to interpret in church late. Or rather not late, nor even at the last minute, but later than I would like to. Later than I would need to. Like today. My usual half-verbalized prayer spoken quietly in the booth just moments before the service starts doesn't quite take me all the way to feeling ready or qualified to serve.

The question is: if I have not encountered God recently, how can I help others encounter Him? Luckily, no one needs interpreting at the start of the service, so I can focus on the worship. I sing along with the band in a hushed voice: "Father, take me into Your arms / before darkness takes over the land / I find rest here

before Your face / You take all my burdens away.” I let out a deep breath.

It comes gradually, the realization of how little this has to do with me and how much it is His work. How much it is grace. I can never be really sure of the extent to which my interpreting aids a listener to encounter the Holy Spirit. In the end, that’s not in my hands. What *is* in my hands is to surrender to His use and pray that I won’t stand in the way. And that’s what I do.

When the first listener takes a set of headphones and nods in my direction through the glass, I smile back and switch on the microphone. I’m ready.

Example (2) discusses two typical means often mentioned in church for preparing to encounter God: prayer and worship music. Here, I as a church interpreter engage in both techniques in order to realign myself with the social meaning attributed to the task of church interpreting, that is, as service rendered to God, in order to participate in the construction of a framework for the listeners’ religious experience. Thus, these “techniques” of spiritual preparation become constitutive for the success of church interpreting; if I as a church interpreter am not “surrendered,” I can provide a linguistic but not a spiritual service for the church.

4.3 Hearing from God: Religious experience during simultaneous interpreting

Deep familiarity with the interpreted event may not only lead to a lessened need to prepare for interpreting, as discussed above, but also to an increased capacity to engage with the spiritual goals of the service. Such engagement

entails that church interpreters not only serve God and the church, helping others to gain a religious experience, but may also take a position similar to the other attendants by seeking and receiving personal religious experiences. In this subsection, my aim is to describe religious experiences during simultaneous church interpreting and to discuss this spiritual participation in light of my identity as a professionally trained interpreter.

The type of religious experience I focus on here is “hearing” from God, which in Pentecostalism is usually explained as hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit in one’s heart or spirit, more rarely as hearing an audible voice with one’s physical ears. Thus the “hearing” to which I refer is a conviction that a message heard in a sermon or testimony or an insight gained during a meeting is, in fact, a personal message from God. Often, though not always, such a conviction has its origin in the timing of the message heard: there may be a problem or a topic current in my life and the message seems to answer to it directly. At other times, the feeling of conviction does not seem to have any apparent reason. Hearing from God or receiving a word from Him differs as an experience from receiving information, even if that information concerned God or had its origin in the Bible. Rather, it could be described as somewhat of a revelation that becomes experientially true (see also Wynn 2012). Thus one may hear (as in receive information concerning the fact) that God loves everyone; but when one *hears* (in the sense used in this discussion) from God that He loves everyone, one is convinced that it is true and can personally feel loved by Him (see also Brown 2007). The revelation, or what one hears from God, in a meeting may, furthermore, seem to be independent of what is said in public by the speakers. In a meeting, when one is in the presence of the Holy Spirit, it is believed that He can communicate directly to believers irrespective of what is discussed aloud.

Example (3) below describes one experience of “hearing” from God that took place in the middle of simultaneous interpreting. The example derives from a single event recorded in field notes in June, 2012.

- (3) At the beginning of the meeting, I notice a few listeners I have not seen before. I want them to have a good impression of God and our church, so I hope I’m able to serve them to the best of my ability. I interpret the worship songs, enjoying the worship myself, even though I cannot sing along or stand up as I would if I did not interpret. But I feel revived, anyway.

In the middle of the sermon, the preacher asks the congregation to take a moment and bless whoever is next to them as a demonstration of the love that Christ has called us to show one another. No one speaks to the microphone during the prayer, so I, too, decide to join the prayer. I mute my microphone and bless an elderly woman sitting in front of the booth window, raising my hand towards her and praying in Finnish and in tongues. Soon the sermon continues, and I feel moved by the message I interpret. After the sermon, the worship begins again, but very soon all who listen to the interpreting take their headphones off and I end my interpreting.

I remain sitting in the booth for a while, listening to the worship on my headphones, and I just enjoy the presence of God. I feel uplifted and at peace. I felt the message of showing the love of Christ to our neighbors as God speaking to me, but I feel I encountered God on a deeper, more personal level, as well. Somehow and at some point during the meeting, God took away the fear I had for my unborn baby – I am five months pregnant

with my first child. I now feel at ease and am convinced that God will take care of me and the baby, even though I cannot say how it happened.

Example (3) illustrates the many ways in which I engaged in the interpreted event: the messages I interpreted became personally meaningful, attested by my participation in prayer and worship, although the forms of participation were different in the two. I prayed like I would as a regular attendant to the service, but was not able to join the worship as I would normally. In addition, the sermon was not only a message I conveyed to others, but I also received it myself. Furthermore, even while I interpreted, I had a personally meaningful encounter with God. Thus, the task of simultaneous interpreting in church was embedded in my personal spirituality.

Taking such an active participant role is in stark contrast with the professional ideal of neutrality or impartiality, understood here as a striving towards personal non-engagement in the social situation that is interpreted. The discussion of professionalism in interpreting often highlights the ideal of impartiality in terms of interpreters not allowing their person to affect their work and attitudes toward their clients (e.g. Jacobsen 2013). However, as established by scholars such as Wadensjö (1998), Diriker (2004), and Angelelli (2004), the interpreter always plays a social role in the interpreted event and does not become “non-present” even when adhering to professional codes of ethics and conduct. Indeed, as argued by Wadensjö (1998), interpreted discussions are always impacted by the presence and the coordinating activity of interpreters, who unavoidably bring their other social selves into the situation.

Nevertheless, I would argue that in the setting studied here, church interpreters’ social selves are primary, unlike in professional interpreting

settings, where the occupational self is, naturally, foregrounded (cf. Wadensjö 1998: 185–186). In professional settings, interpreters' social selves do not usually define their ability to function as interpreters. In the church studied here, however, a person may not function as an interpreter without the social self of being a church member or, at the least, committed to the ideology of the church (Hokkanen 2012). Thus, the active engagement of the church interpreter in the interpreted event and its spiritual goals are intrinsic to the task of volunteer simultaneous interpreting in the church, as exemplified by the above narratives (see also Balci Tison 2016).

5. Conclusions

The autoethnographic examination of my experiences as a simultaneous interpreter in the Pentecostal Church of Seinäjoki provided in this paper illustrates the ways in which my identity as a Pentecostal Christian volunteering at my church coexists with my identity as a professionally trained interpreter. Regarding preparation, this coexistence seems fairly harmonious: I find it important to prepare before interpreting at church, even though the mode of preparation is mainly spiritual. I have also made practical preparations before interpreting at church, in much the same way as I would for a professional assignment. However, such practical preparation used to carry more importance for me in the past than it does currently. As my experience of church interpreting has accumulated, I have found that my need for practical preparation has diminished. This can be interpreted as being congruent to professional practice: as the interpreter becomes intimately familiar with the characteristics of and the area of specialized knowledge within the interpreted event, the need for extensive prior preparation may become less important.

However, as regards the role of religious experience during the interpreted service, my identities as a Pentecostal and as a professionally trained interpreter are not as easily compatible. First, the responsibility of the church interpreter in the setting studied here extends beyond linguistic and cultural mediation into the mediation of religious experience. In other words, church interpreters' task is seen to carry religious significance in that their service is intended to help the listeners to encounter God. Second, church interpreters' active engagement in the interpreted service attests to the significance of their social selves as church members. Church interpreters not only provide a service, but they also engage in the interpreted event as primary participants. Thus, they may seek and receive personal religious experiences even while interpreting simultaneously.

When examined with the help of identifications and disidentifications, as done in this paper, the notions of professionalism and non-professionalism become much more complex than the simplified and dualistic assertion that professional interpreting equals training, ethics and quality and non-professional interpreting a lack thereof. Instead, the notions of professionalism and non-professionalism can be seen from a more social perspective as certain contexts of practice carrying certain meanings and values that are filtered into the person of the interpreter operating within these contexts. The autoethnographic lens through which this social perspective was acquired here thus brings into view a professionally trained interpreter serving her church as a simultaneous interpreter incorporating parts of both worlds into her interpreting experience and practice.

References

AIIC. 2015. "Code of Professional Ethics". The International Association of Conference Interpreters. Available at: <http://aiic.net/page/6724> (last accessed 18 April, 2016).

Angelelli, Claudia. 2004. *Revisiting the Interpreter's Role. A Study of Conference, Court, and Medical Interpreters in Canada, Mexico, and the United States*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

-- 2015. "Ethnographic Methods". *Routledge Encyclopedia of Interpreting Studies* ed. by Franz Pöchhacker, 148-150. London & New York: Routledge.

Balcı Tison, Alev. 2016. *The Interpreter's Involvement in a Translated Institution: A Case Study of Sermon Interpreting*. Ph.D. dissertation, Rovira i Virigili University.

Bochner, Arthur P. 2012. "On First-person Narrative Scholarship: Autoethnography as Acts of Meaning." *Narrative Inquiry* 22:1.155-164.

Bowie, Fiona. 2003. "An Anthropology of Religious Experience: Spirituality, Gender and Cultural Transmission in the Focolare Movement". *ETHNOS* 68:1.49-72.

Brown, David. 2007. "Experience Skewed". *Transcending Boundaries in Philosophy and Theology: Reason, Meaning and Experience* ed. by Kevin Vanhoozer & Martin Warner, 159-175. Hampshire, England & Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate.

Chang, Heewon. 2008. *Autoethnography as Method*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press.

Chang, Heewon & Drick Boyd, eds. 2011. *Spirituality in Higher Education: Autoethnographies*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: Left Coast Press.

Cross, Terry L. 2009. "The Divine-Human Encounter. Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Experience". *Pneuma* 31.3-34.

Diriker, Ebru. 2004. *De-/Re-Contextualizing Conference Interpreting: Interpreters in the Ivory Tower?* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Ellis, Carolyn, Tony E. Adams & Arthur P. Bochner. 2011. "Autoethnography: An Overview". *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 12:1. Art. 10.

Ellis, Carolyn & Arthur P. Bochner. 2000. "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity. Researcher as Subject". *Handbook of Qualitative Research* ed. by Norman K. Denzin & Yvonna S. Lincoln, second edition, 733-768. Thousand Oaks, London & New Delhi: Sage.

Flynn, Peter. 2010. "Ethnographic approaches". *Handbook of Translation Studies* ed. by Yves Gambier & Luc van Doorslaer, vol I, 116-119. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Geertz, Clifford. 1973/1993. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. London: Fulham Press.

Hale, Sandra & Jemina Napier. 2013. *Research Methods in Interpreting: A Practical Resource*. London, New Delhi, New York & Sydney: Bloomsbury.

Harris, Brian. 2009. "Essential Definitions". 13 July 2009. Available at: <http://unprofessionaltranslation.blogspot.fi/2009/07/essential-definitions.html> (last accessed 18 April, 2016).

-- 2010. "From Natural to Expert Translator, With Essential Definitions". 12 November 2010. Available at: <http://unprofessionaltranslation.blogspot.fi/2010/11/from-natural-to-expert-translator.html> (last accessed 18 April, 2016).

-- 2012. "Unprofessional Translation: A Blog-Based Overview". Keynote speech presented at The First International Conference on Non-Professional Interpreting and Translation, Forlì, May, 2012.

Hokkanen, Sari. 2010. "Simultaanitulkkaus palvelemisena – etnografinen tutkimus [Simultaneous interpreting as service: An ethnographic study]". Master's thesis, University of Tampere. Available at: <http://tampub.uta.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/82781/gradu05261.pdf?sequence=1> (last accessed 18 April, 2016).

-- 2012. "Simultaneous Church Interpreting as Service". *The Translator* 18:2.291-309.

Hollenweger, Walter J. 1997. *Pentecostalism. Origins and Developments Worldwide*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers.

Hornsby-Smith, Michael P. 1998. "Religious experience: A sociological perspective". *The Heythrop Journal* 39.413-433.

Jacobsen, Bente. 2013. "Training the Trainers: Dealing with Interpreting Ethics". *Training the Trainers: Nordic Seminar on Interpreter Education. Stockholm* ed. by Cecilia Wadensjö, 38-47. Tolk- och översättarinstitutet, Stockholms universitet.

Jiang, Hong. 2013. "The interpreter's glossary in simultaneous interpreting: A survey". *Interpreting* 15:1.74-93.

Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. 2001. "Church as Charismatic Fellowship: Ecclesiological Reflections from the Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue". *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18.100-121.

-- 2005. "Vapaakristillisuus, helluntailaisuus ja baptismi [Free Christianity, Pentecostalism and Baptism]". *Kirkkotiedon kirja. Ekumeeninen johdatus kirkkojen oppiin ja elämään* ed. by Pekka Metso & Esko Ryökäs, 285-326. Helsinki: Kirjapaja.

Miller, Donald E. & Tetsunao Yamamori. 2007. *Global Pentecostalism. The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Ewing, N.J.: University of California Press.

Napier, Jemina. 2011. "If a Tree Falls in the Forest, Does it Make a Noise? The Merits of Publishing Interpreting Research". *Advances in Interpreting Research: Inquiry in Action* ed. by Brenda Nichodemus & Laurie Swabey, 121-152. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Nelson, Timothy J. 2005. *Every Time I Feel the Spirit: Religious Experience, Ritual, and Emotion in an African American Church*. New York: New York University Press.

Saldanha, Gabriela & Sharon O'Brien. 2013. *Research Methodologies in Translation Studies*. London & New York: Routledge.

Shlesinger, Miriam. 2009. "Crossing the divide: What researchers and practitioners can learn from one another". *The International Journal of Translation and Interpreting Research* 1:1.1-14.

SKTL. 1994. "Tulkin ammattisäännöstö" [The interpreter's code of conduct]. Suomen kääntäjien ja tulkkien liitto [The Finnish Association of Translators and Interpreters]. Available at:
<http://www.sktl.fi/@Bin/33666/tulkin+ammattis%C3%A4%C3%A4nn%C3%B6st%C3%B6.pdf> (last accessed 18 April, 2016).

Sparkes, Andrew C. 2002. "Autoethnography: Self-Indulgence or Something More?" *Ethnographically Speaking: Autoethnography, Literature, and Aesthetics* ed. by Arthur P. Bochner & Carolyn Ellis, 207-232. Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira.

Terho, Toni. 2006. "Uskonnollisesti aktiiviset kirkon ulkopuolella – Helluntaiseurakunnan ja Kallion nuorten aikuisten vertailua [The Religiously Active outside the (Evangelical Lutheran) Church – Comparisons between a Pentecostal Church and Young Adults in Kallio]". *Urbaani usko. Nuoret aikuiset, usko ja kirkko (= Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja 96)* ed. by Teija Mikkola, Kati Niemelä & Juha Petterson, 278-290. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus.

Vik-Tuovinen, Gun-Viol. 2006. *Tolkning på olika nivåer av professionalism* [Interpreting on different levels of professionalism] (=Acta Wasaensia 153). Ph.D. dissertation, University of Vaasa.

Wadensjö, Cecilia. 1998. *Interpreting as Interaction*. London & New York: Longman.

Wynn, Mark. 2012. "Renewing the senses: conversion experience and the phenomenology of the spiritual life". *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 72.211-226.

¹Until then, like the majority of Finns, I had been a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, although a relatively passive one.

²A joke on the importance of practical preparation is told among Pentecostals: a preacher had prepared spiritually for his sermon, but had neglected practical preparation. Thus, he had no notes or even an idea on what he would say, but wanted to give the Holy Spirit as much room as possible to say what He wanted him to say. While sitting in the meeting before his time to speak came, he prayed and prayed, asking God to give him a word and getting more and more anxious. When he took his place behind the microphone, God finally gave him a word: "Lazy."